

CDC Announces Change in Recommendations for use of Antivirals; Clinicians Should Not Prescribe Two Common Antivirals

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On January 14, 2006 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced that clinicians should not prescribe two common antivirals (amantadine and rimantadine) to treat or prevent influenza during the 2005-2006 influenza season. Laboratory testing by CDC on the predominant strain of influenza (H3N2) currently circulating in the United States shows that it is resistant to these drugs.

CDC has tested 120 influenza A (H3N2) virus isolates and found that 109 (or 91 percent) were resistant to amantadine and rimantadine. This represents a sharp increase from last year when only 11 percent of isolates tested were resistant and 1.9 percent were resistant the year before that. However, all H3 and H1 influenza viruses tested to date are susceptible to the other commonly used antivirals (oseltamivir and zanamivir).

During the remainder of this flu season, CDC recommends oseltamivir (Tamiflu) and zanamivir (Relenza) be prescribed if an antiviral medication is needed for the treatment or prevention of influenza.

For more information, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov/flu.

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